FICTION EXPOSURE STUDY

One study we completed over the past year in collaboration with colleagues at York University and Dalhousie University was aimed at examining the relationship between children’s development and media exposure.

In this study, we were primarily interested in a child’s ability to reason about other people’s minds, their capacity to understand that other people have thoughts, feelings, and beliefs just like their own. This ability typically develops between the ages of 4 and 6.

Our hypothesis was that exposure to different types of narrative media might influence children’s ability to understand the mental states and emotions of others. For example, reading about a character’s beliefs (or differing beliefs between characters) in a storybook can help teach children about beliefs in others.

Moreover, the act of trying to understand the behavior of characters in terms of the mental states that drive these actions, could help them come to understand real people in a similar way. We examined all sorts of different media, including books, television shows, and movies.

What we found was that after controlling for numerous other factors, the amount of exposure to children’s storybooks predicted better ability to think about others’ mental states. This was also true of movies, but not television. A manuscript regarding these interesting study results is currently under review at the journal of Developmental Science.

CHILD PERSONALITY & BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES STUDY

In the Child Personality and Behavioural Outcomes Study (CPBS) we are studying how individual differences in personality traits are related to behaviour in middle childhood.

Through a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and interactive activities we are able to study how children’s personalities influence their thoughts, feelings, and interpersonal relationships.

Thanks to all of the families who have already visited the PAD lab we are more than halfway to completing our first round of testing!

CPBS FOLLOW UP

At the one year anniversary of your first visit to the PAD lab we will also be contacting families for a follow-up.

For the follow up to the CPBS we are asking parents to fill out some questionnaires about their child’s personality and events that have occurred since your visit to the PAD.

DELAY OF GRATIFICATION PROJECT

The Delay of Gratification project is seeking to validate a measure of the kind of decisions children make and how that is related to their personality.

It is a short, approximately 30-minute fun and interactive protocol consisting of story reading and various number games.

We are looking for participants in various youth groups of children 8-11 years. If you know of any such groups who may be interested in being contacted, please let us know! Your help is very valuable and always much appreciated.